

Community United Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



The Second Sunday of Lent

March 5, 2023:

11:00 AM

The Second Sunday of Lent

We are now in the Season of Lent. It is a six-week span in the church year when Christians contemplate the life and ministry of Jesus Christ—whose path ultimately led to death on a Cross. Within these six weeks, Christians are invited to fast and pray for 40 days—calling to mind Christ's 40 days in the desert, in which he wrestled with temptations of power. From the desert, Christ would come forth showing that the power of God is love. That love was put on ultimate display when Christ turned his own condemnation and death into forgiveness and new life.



Today's Readings:

Genesis 12:1-4a
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
Psalm 121
John 3:1-17



Theme:

Body and Spirit: Coming Wholly Alive

Pastoral Team:

Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty, Senior Pastor
Pastor Joy Johnson, Associate Minister

*Whoever you are, and wherever
you are on life's journey, you are
welcome here!*

Welcome, Announcements, and Prayer Requests

Centering Music

Invocation

One: Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our eternal Advocate and Friend.

All: And also with you.

One: Holy and Loving God, our scriptures teach us that you fashioned our bodies from the elements of the earth—in a long chain of life unfolding, you called us to be. Then, breathing spirit into us, you infused your image and likeness within us—as beings who are creative, loving, and capable of choice.

One: O God, teach us—once more—how to be truly alive in body and spirit, so that we may flourish as your children, now and into eternity. Amen!

* Opening Hymn “Let All Creation Bless the Lord” #25

Let all creation bless the Lord, till heaven with praise is ringing.
Sun, moon, and stars, peal out a chord, stir up the angels' singing.
Sing, wind and rain! Sing, snow and sleet! Make music, day, night, cold, and heat!
Exalt the God who made you!

All living things upon the earth, green fertile hills and mountains,
Sing to the God who gave you birth! Be joyful, springs and fountains,
Lithe water life, bright airborne birds, wild roving beasts, tame flocks and herds!
Exalt the God who made you!

O men and women everywhere, lift up a hymn of glory.
Let all who know God's steadfast care tell out salvation's story.
No tongue be silent—sing your part, you humble souls and meek of heart!
Exalt the God who made you!

***Opening Prayer**

***Sign of Peace**

One: The peace of Christ be with all of you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

(You may choose to shake hands, hug, or simply acknowledge one another without physical touch based on your comfort and/or health needs.)

Confession

One: People of God, through Jesus Christ, we are called to be a royal priesthood—we are to serve God and humanity, and to offer intercession with love and wisdom.

Through the power of prayer and intention, let us intercede for the world today by calling for mercy and healing. *Let us pray:* For all sins born of bias and privilege that exclude and harm others.

All: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

One: For the terrible habits of settling differences through violence—in our homes, on our streets, and in those times of needless armed conflicts.

All: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

One: For a renewal of all your people, O God, that they—and we—may be so moved by love, that the vision of true peace may soon heal the world.

All: May it be so, through the power and presence of your Holy Spirit, and in the way of Christ. Amen.

Lenten Meditation & Candles

Song of Reflection

“Jesus Remember Me” #285

(Sing Three Times)

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.

First Reading

Genesis 12:1-4a

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” ⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him.

Song of Reflection

“Step by Step” #494

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.

I will seek you in the morning, and I will learn to walk in your ways;

And step by step you’ll lead me, and I will follow you all of my days.

(Repeat)



Second Reading

Paul's Letter to the Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵ But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Responsorial

Psalm 121

One: I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?

All: My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

One: God will not let your foot be moved; the God who keeps you will not slumber. The Holy One who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

All: The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall no strike you by day nor the moon by night.

One: The LORD will keep you from all evil; God will keep your life.

All: The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore. Amen!

*Lenten Acclamation

"Surely the Presence" #131

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place;
I can feel his mighty power and his grace.
I can hear the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face;
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.



*Gospel

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

One: These is the Gospel of Christ for the people of God.

All: Come Holy Spirit! Thanks be to God!

Message

Body and Spirit: Coming Wholly Alive

Pastor Rich



Musical Reflection

“.....”

COMMUNION LITURGY

Pastor: People of God, come to the table! Christ promised that as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we not only remember him, but we commune with him by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

All: This is a table of grace. There is room around it for every soul that was, and is, and is to come. We come to the table as a people who are learning the way of Christ. We confess that we are not always right. But we share this faith: that those who trust in Christ Jesus will grow in the assurance of God's eternal love.

Pastor: And so, here at this table we take bread and cup and ask the Holy Spirit to make it for us: communion with Christ, who gave his life as the bread of heaven and as the cup of eternal life.

All: Here at this table we remember that Christ gave his entire life as an outpouring of God's love—a love that will, one day, renew all things. Amen.

Pastor: People of God, come to the table!

Communion Music "..."

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer

One: The Lord be with you.

All: ***And also with you.***

One: *Let us pray:* For the prayer requests that have come to us today, whether joys or sorrows...*[prayer requests are presented]*...Holy and loving God, in your wisdom, meet all of these needs in the perfect way of your grace.

All: God hear our prayer!

One: For anyone who desires to come alive in this life: in spirit, in heart, in mind, in relationships; and in faith, hope, and love.

All: God hear our prayer!

One: That we would learn to embrace the totality of our being as God-given—to delight that we are embodied spirits and inspirited bodies.

All: God hear our prayer!

One: For all that we hold in the silence of our hearts, we come to you in the confidence of quiet, O God, and lift our petitions privately to you. *(Silent prayer)*... Almighty God, Sovereign of Heaven, shower your blessings upon all people! Move the mountains in our lives, or help to move us so that we might be fully at peace. This we pray in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray...

All: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors—and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory forever." Amen.

Offering

Our offerings are first and foremost what we give to the world through justice, kindness, and mercy—and these we can do every day. Our offerings can also take the form of financial contributions to the church to support our ministries.

If you are not in the sanctuary, online donations can be made at:

www.communityunited.church

Or, if you prefer to mail in a check, that can be addressed to the church at:

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508

Ministry of Music and Time for Contemplation

Cheryl Strecker

Your offerings make this inclusive ministry possible. Thank you! Because of you, our church reaches through and beyond Erie: providing worship, community, and service. As you can give generously, it is well received.

*Lenten Congregational Response #576

***Make me a servant, humble and meek.
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak!
And may the prayer of my heart always be:
Make me a servant! Make me a servant!
Make me a servant today!***



*Departing Prayer

One: Holy and loving God, as you guided Abraham, Sarah, and Nicodemus by faith into new promised lands of deeper communion with you; guide us, too, that we may know the fullness of peace.

All: Help us to step with courage on this holy path, confident in the radiant life that is your will for us, made known and given in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

*Blessing

*Closing Hymn “For the Healing of the Nations” #621

For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord,
For a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word.

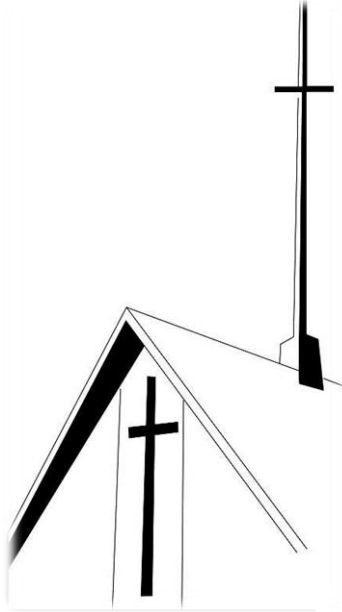
Lead your people into freedom, from despair your world release,
That, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace.
Show us how, through care and goodness, fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned:
Pride of status, race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life’s brief span.

You, Creator-God, have written your great name on humankind;
For our growing in your likeness, bring the life of Christ to mind;
That by our response and service earth its destiny may find.



**Thank you for worshipping with us this morning at
Community United Church!**



Next Sunday:

11:00 AM

Readings:

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 95

John 4:5-42

**The Third Sunday of Lent:
The Water of Life**

***Need to contact us for prayer, conversation, or to connect
with a small group or church ministry?***

1011 West 38th Street – Erie, PA 16508

(814) – 864 – 4429

www.communityunited.church



Community United Church

THE ALTAR FLOWERS THIS MORNING ARE GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND FOR LOVED ONES WHO ARE NO LONGER WITH US, AND FOR THOSE WHO ARE, FROM PAM AND AL TILLEY.



WE REMEMBER THOSE IN OUR ARMED FORCES:

Jacob Snyder (Army), Nick Duncan (Army), Samantha McHenry (Army),
Chris Duncan (Marines), Matt Duncan (Army), Tyler Anderson (Army National Guard),
Shelby Wescott (Army), Mathew Anderson (Army)
and DJ Miaczynski (Marines)

PRAYERS FOR:

Kevin Bennett and family and friends, Rod and Dew Johnson, Harry Lamb, Sue Scheiwer,
Diane Walker, George Churley,
Robin Adams, Ralph Kester, Sharon Cooper, Todd Carrier, Teddy Long, Jimmyo, Sandy
Gool, Tammy McIntyre, Laura Stone, Jared and Priscilla Hall, Ron Celeski,
Sally Cubetus, and Annette Minich.

Council Members:

*Debbie Anderson (President), Bob Martin (VP), Dina Johnson (Secretary), Janice Skelly, Mike Pruzinsky, April Knapp,
Patti Rogers, Carol Rodgers, and Angel Hall*